

May 22, 2008

Letters to the Editor

childhood obesity

Insurers should cover medical evaluation cost

Thank you for the article "Children pay high price for obesity" on the front page Sunday.

There is much happening in Hawai'i to address our childhood overweight epidemic. The Department of Education is implementing the Wellness Program. The Department of Health, through the Healthy Hawai'i Initiative, is working on the Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan. The John A. Burns School of Medicine Department of Pediatrics recently held a mini-retreat to review the pediatric overweight research needs for our state.

Through a grant from the HMSA Foundation, the Pediatric Foundation of Hawaii is working with the Hawaii Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to offer statewide training for healthcare professionals in The Hawaii Pediatric Weight Management Toolkit. This locally written toolkit is focused on helping pediatric healthcare providers implement recent national expert recommendations concerning evaluation and treatment of overweight children and adolescents.

Unfortunately, these efforts are stymied because health plans do not pay for doctor or dietitian services when evaluating and formulating treatment plans for overweight and obese children. Families must spend their own money to access these needed medical services.

The time to act is now. Employers, health insurance plans and mutual benefit societies: Join the rest of the healthcare community and work with us as we move our community forward in efforts to protect our children from the ravages of obesity. The children of Hawai'i need your help now.

Galen Chock M.D. | President, The American Academy of Pediatrics, Hawaii Chapter

'long war'

No clean, unsullied end to the disaster in Iraq

In December 2004, I wrote a letter to this paper asserting that the U.S. must fulfill its commitment to Iraq as a matter of honor.

As the "Long War" drags on — with little sign of progress — I believe that my former misguided idealism far oversimplified the matter at hand.

As I have heard Barack Obama express (perhaps in not so many words), there will be no clean answer to end the Iraq war. We must not be led astray by absolute idealism; rather, we must achieve resolution by getting down and dirty in the impure complexity of our world.

In this moral bog, there will be no sparkling answer to the Iraqi quagmire; instead, we must face its issues with pragmatic flexibility, ever aware that there will be no silver bullet miraculously bringing a clean, unsullied end to the Iraqi disaster.